

United States Senate

November 25, 2020

The Honorable Alex Azar
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Azar:

Thank you for your continued efforts to fight the coronavirus pandemic and keep Americans safe and healthy. The Administration has made tremendous progress when it comes to vaccine development, and reports suggest an authorized vaccine may be available to Americans by the end of the year. This is great news, but fast, reliable and equitable vaccine distribution will require large-scale, coordinated efforts among federal, state, territorial, local jurisdictions and private entities. This challenge is substantial and a significant amount of oversight will be needed to hold all stakeholders accountable.

Recently, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) requested that states provide them with a plan on how they will operationalize a vaccination response to COVID-19 within their jurisdictions. While the states have responded to that initial request, it is unclear exactly how federal, state and local governments will coordinate in this execution. More information is needed to reassure Americans that their states will do everything possible to efficiently and equitably distribute a vaccine. In order to provide the most transparent information possible, please answer the following questions:

- Currently, only the executive summaries of state reports are posted by the CDC on its website. Transparent and detailed information should be available to Americans on their state's plans for vaccine distribution. Does the CDC plan to make the states' full vaccine distribution plans publicly available?
- Will the CDC provide final guidance, not interim guidance, for states? Will this guidance include metrics and infrastructure that needs to be in place for a successful vaccine distribution?
- According to the draft executive summaries, many states have formed committees or have started the process to enroll providers or identify target populations for a vaccine. Will the CDC provide the vaccines to states that have not finished their planning guidance?

The Honorable Alex Azar
November 25, 2020
Page Two

- What are the ramifications if a state has not finished setting up their vaccine adverse event monitoring or vaccine registry?
- Recently, the CDC contracted directly with pharmacies to distribute the vaccine. How does that effort harmonize with the state's responsibility to recruit providers for vaccine distribution? How will HHS make allocations between state providers and federally-contracted providers?
- Will CDC provide a firm definition for populations in the different priority groups? Will each state have to define what an essential worker is in the Priority 1 group? How will states prioritize all Priority 1 groups if the vaccine allocation is less than this population for the state?
- Is race, ethnicity or health equity a consideration when determining eligibility for a priority group? Does the CDC require states to do specific outreach to minority communities?
- CDC has requested \$6 billion for state, territorial and local jurisdictions for vaccine preparedness. Can you provide details about how that estimate was calculated and how these funds would be spent by the states?
- Do all states have the necessary IT infrastructure and data-sharing agreements to properly report information to CDC in a timely manner? Will the CDC require the states to provide detailed data throughout the process, and to keep Congress informed in turn?

I appreciate any information you can provide as we continue to work to end the coronavirus. Americans deserve transparency and as much information as possible from every level of government so they can make the best decisions to keep their families safe. It is vital that we get the vaccine to Americans safely and efficiently without unnecessary delays. This will require detailed planning and coordination at every level.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rick Scott", with a stylized, cursive script.

Rick Scott
United States Senator